

A **picture** is a great way to convey your message quickly to an audience without them reading through a lot of text. Shareability: **Images** can be easily shared by other people, which means your **story** will be seen by a larger audience. You could even link the **image** back to an article you want your target audience to read. A photo editor's nightmare is when someone shows him a picture and then starts to explain what's in it. In the worst cases, the photographer starts to talk about important things that aren't even in the shot.

In the simplest of terms, a storytelling photograph must *show* what the story is about. As the stories we want to tell with pictures get more complex, it becomes harder to fit all the elements into one frame. However, trying to make that happen is a great exercise.

The first step is to photograph all aspects of the story. Get to know the subject until you can decide what visual elements help tell the tale of that place or person.

Think about it in terms of covering the story from different angles. Photograph your subject from near, far away, back, front.

The key to an interesting photographic coverage is variety. Change up the size of the subject in the photographic frame. Shoot the same thing with different focal length settings. This is the time to really play around.

Photos work best when they have more than one storytelling element. In this case I was pretty bummed that the rain and fog were obscuring the Alaskan mountain range behind the glacier. Then I found out our boat was to be visited by two National Park Service rangers. Their small size emphasized the scale of the landscape.

One of my tricks is to think of adjectives that can describe a place and then see how many of them I can get into a photograph. Here I'm showing Cold, Fog, Rain, Immensity, Ruggedness, and Struggle

Stories are integral to human culture and storytelling is timeless. In photographic practice, visual storytelling is often called a 'photo essay' or 'photo story'. It's a way for a photographer to narrate a story with a series of photographs. What few people realise is there's a difference between photography, and visual storytelling through photography.

If we consider storytelling as an art then, as Leo Tolstoy said, it should be utterly infectious, where it infects the viewer with the feelings he or she has lived through, so that other people are infected in turn by these experiences. The phrase 'a picture is worth a thousand words' itself justifies the art of visual storytelling, however this doesn't mean all photographs narrate a story.

In visual storytelling, images are ordered in a specific way, either chronologically or as a series, with the aim of 'infecting' the viewer's vision and mind, just like Tolstoy said.

Captions are also an integral part of a photo story that should help the viewer understand each image. That said, it is important to remember that while captions may expand your understanding of an image, it's the image itself that should tell the story – never the other way round

#1: Plan, plan and plan some more

#2: Single shot or a series?

#3: Take stronger images

#4: Trust your instincts

#5: Be original

#6: Don't be afraid of failure

As we know from cave paintings, pictures are one of the oldest storytelling forms, but in recent years they have sometimes seemed to have been pushed into the background. I think that the growth of the digital world, however, is changing this. Digital media makes it very easy and cheap to share images and to communicate visually online. We see this in the popularity of sharing images on social networks and of social networks dedicated solely to images. We are re-realising the power of images to tell a story.

I think that the attitude that sees illustrated books as something exclusively for children is short-sighted – and I think this point of view is something, thankfully, that fewer and fewer people hold. We can see this in the inclusion of [two graphic novels in the shortlist for the Costa Book Awards](#) this year. And in the fact that the chairman of judges for next year's Man Booker prize says that he [would welcome entries from graphic novel creators](#).

If illustration is so important to the books that JJ Books publishes, does that make them 'graphic novels'?

I am not sure – but I don't think that how we describe a book ultimately matters. I am glad that more and more people seem to be realising that words and pictures are equally valuable. They each tell stories in different ways – and when they work together, their power is all the greater.

Plot – good stories are more than just empty words. They explore ideas, feelings, experiences etc on a deeper level. Plot shots will probably make up the majority of your photographic story. They show what happens but also explore themes and ideas.

So in a travel album I try to identify themes in my shots that I will revisit throughout a trip. Types of themes might include:

- **Visual themes** – perhaps colors or shapes that come up again and again on a trip – for example a friend recently showed me his album from a recent trip to the Greek Islands that featured quite a few shots with white buildings and blue seas – very powerful.
- **Stylistic themes** – repetition of photographic techniques and styles. For example on my last overseas trip I decided to include a series of macro shots of the different flora that I saw and ended up with a series of shots of flowers from a variety of different parts of the world.
- **Locational themes** – reoccurring photos from similar types of places. For example on a trip a few years back I decided to make ‘markets’ a theme in my shots across the trip. I sought out and photographed markets in every city and town we visited. I found it fascinating to see the similarities and differences between them.
- **Relational themes** – shots that focus upon a person or people over time. On a travel story this might document the moods of a person as they go through the highs and lows of travel or could document the development of a relationship between friends, lovers, siblings etc over time.

A photographic story might just focus upon one theme or could intertwine a number of them. Not every shot in a travel album will probably fit in with themes but I find that when you work to build them into what you do that there is a real payoff.

Sometimes themes will emerge while you’re on the go (on a trip for example things will hit you while on the road that you’d never have expected to explore) but many of them are things that you need to consider and plan for. For example my ‘market’ and ‘flora’ themes were things I had to build into my trip. I sought these shots out and put myself in places where I’d get the shots I was after.

Some photographers write themselves a ‘hit list’ of shots that they want to get in a given day (this is what I do with weddings) while others do it more informally in their mind – but most good photographers have the ability to not only take good spontaneous shots but also are quite intentional about getting the types of shots that they need.